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Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan

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OTORITAS

JIP

VOL. XIII

NO. 1

PP. 01-181

APRIL 2023

P-ISSN 2088-3706

E-ISSN 2502-9320



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Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan

Volume 13 • Number 1 • 2023

OTORITAS : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan

Published by the Department of Government Studies,
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar

For further information, please visit: <https://journal.unismuh.ac.id/otoritas>

ISSN: 2088-3706 (Print) | 2502-9320 (Online) | DOI : 10.26618

First published in April 2011

Please send all articles, essays, reviews, and documents to:

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OTORITAS : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan indexed by :



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Unfolding women's role in small-scale fishing community in The Philippines toward formulating a gender-sensitive local government policy

Joy Tricia Mae Corpuz¹, Reynald Cacho^{2*)}, Brenda Villamor³, Maria Gracia Samson⁴,
Ma. Sheila Simat⁵

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Abstract

Women have a crucial role in the fishery value chains, from pre-fishing to post-fishing activities; however, the lack of sex-disaggregated local level data aggravates the women's invisibility and marginalization in the informal fishing industry and community. Generating local knowledge and representation, this study presents women's role and challenges working in small-scale fisheries in Perez, Quezon, Philippines. Fifty female fisherfolks from the said sector participated in this case study. The results from the field survey indicate that the participants widely dispersed to inland capture fisheries, marine capture fisheries, non-food use production and food fishery production categories. The results also showed that the respondents are scattered across the value chain: active fishing, processing, subsistence fishing, marketing, and pre-fishing activities, in varying intensity and pattern. In contrast to stereotypes that exclusively associate women to gleaning invertebrates, the majority target fish species and other marine invertebrates. Environmental, socio-economic, personal and gender factors are the common constraints that limit their productivity, output, and more importantly their equitable roles and identities. Although coming from a small fishing community, the findings of this study may provide baseline information for relevant local government agency to further intensify profiling on the grounds and to strategically implement gender-sensitive mainstreaming programs.

Keywords: *women's fishing, gender role, fishing community, Philippines*

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Introduction

The fishing sector is often regarded as a male-dominated sector; thus, women's crucial role in fishery remains invisible in the statistics. One of the main reasons is that, historically, the fishery sector has been recording the number of fisherfolk in a gender-blind approach (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA] Fisheries, 2020). This gave rise to the lack of relevant sex-disaggregated data and contributed to the branding of the fishery sector as a masculine activity (McMurray, 2007), and tagging of women to post-harvest activities which creates gender-segregated division of labor. Thereafter, men are in the first level value chain (fishing) while women are designated in the processing of catch or harvest. Moreover, it caused invisibility of women in the statistics (NOAA, 2020; Siason, 2002), issues in gender mainstreaming (Mutia, Muyot, Torres Jr., & Faminialagao, 2018) with the benefits that fisherwomen enjoy and access (Arenas & Lentisco, 2011), and the limited accessibility of public to published resources that cover women's role and participation in fisheries.

Fortunately, modern statistical reports, studies, and even policies are now covering women's participation and contributions in the fishery sectors. According to Food and Agriculture (FAO) (2020), there are 59.5 million people who are involved in the primary fishery sectors in 2018. In the gender-split statistics, women account for 14% of the 59.5 million fishery workers in the primary sectors. From the recorded 14% female workers in 2016, 25% of the labor account for pre-harvest activities, 60% for external marketing activities and 40% for internal marketing (Singh, Sharma, & Ghorai, 2018). However, it was noted in the report that when considering both primary and secondary fishery sectors, local non-government organizations often report that there is one woman out of two workers involved.

In the Philippines, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that 957,551 fisherfolks are involved in the capture fisheries, 217,198 in aquaculture, 110,851 in fish vending, 241,138 in gleaning, 36,129 in fish processing and 390,892 in other relevant sectors (BFAR, 2019). However, no sex-disaggregated data in the report distinguishes women workers from men workers, akin to others as argued in previous studies (Branch & Kleiber, 2017; Frangoudes & Gerrard, 2018; Harper, Grubb, Stiles, & Sumaila, 2017) and in both quantitative and qualitative data on women's fisheries participation (Monfort, 2015). Local studies, on the other hand, have already explored the gender roles in the fishing industry. Among these recent studies is the paper of Torell, Castro, Lazarte, & Bilecki, (2021) which analyzed the gender roles, and the power relationships in fishing communities. Their findings highlighted the integrated yet unequal role of fishermen and fisherwomen in terms of workload, decision making and leadership. Similar studies have been conducted in other parts of the Philippines but explicit research undertakings to characterize women's involvement in an informal and small-scale fishing community are notably fewer. At a larger extent, local government units (LGUs) should also explicitly acknowledge and properly address the people's participation (including that of the women) through formulating guidelines. In Indonesia, the local governments take the lead in involving the stakeholders in the government's effort to protect the coral reefs and in organizing community watchdog groups (Radu, Prianto, & Tahir, 2012). Likewise, local governments were also found to be instrumental in increasing the economic value of fishery product businesses in Indonesia (Nahrudin, 2014). As observed in this study's study site, these interventions by local government units are lacking. Given these gaps, the researchers aim to provide relevant and updated data by assessing and defining women's role in the fishery value chains, participation in different fishing activities, and the challenges they experience to shed light in the LGUs' formulation of policies that will address these issues.

Research Method

This case study employed a field survey method of data collection. Following health protocols at the earlier phase of the pandemic, abiding by research ethics, and gaining consent from the respondents to participate in the study, data were primarily obtained through household and field surveys using questionnaires that were personally administered by field staff or volunteer university extensionists. This provided the researchers data on female fisherfolks' roles across the value chains, nature of their participation in capture fisheries, level of involvement in pre to post-fishing activities and the challenges that they encounter in the study areas. Specifically, the survey questionnaire covered the demographic profile of respondents, the nature of their

involvement in the fishing industry, the extent of their involvement in different value chains of fishery, and open-ended questions that solicit the challenges they encountered in the small-scale fishing industry of Perez, Quezon. Finally, coded and aggregated data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. The data was collected within two months, from May to June 2021.

The study was conducted within the municipal waters of Perez, Quezon, Philippines, situated at latitude 14°11'00" north and longitude 121°57'00" east. It is "bounded on north by the Pacific Ocean, on the south by Lamong Bay, on the east by the municipality of Alabat and on the west by Pacific Ocean" (Perez Quezon GOVPH, n.d. para. 2-3). It has uneven coastlines with rugged shores and beaches. Perez, Quezon has a total population of 12,767 (PhilAtlas, 2023). It has a total of 14 barangays (villages) and two of the major livelihoods of its populace are fishing and farming. Figure 1 situates the location where data were collected from the ground. Out of the 14 barangays, seven were selected as study sites: Bagong Silang, Sangirin, Pagkakaisa, Pinagtubigan Weste, Pinagtubigan Este, Villamanzano Sur and Villamanzano Norte. These barangays have the highest number of registered fisherfolks in the municipality and represent the informal and small-scale fishing communities with varied fishing activities in capture fisheries and proximity to bodies of water: sea, estuaries, and river.

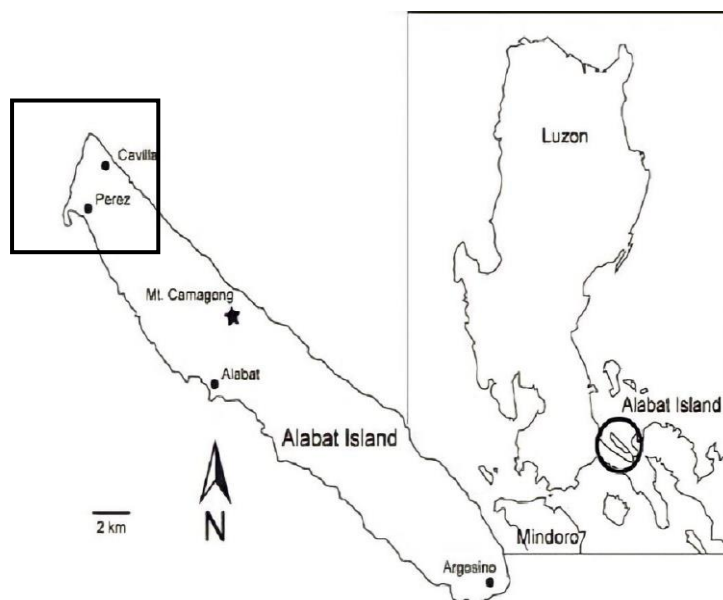


Figure 1. Location of Perez in Quezon Province, Philippines.

There are 1,498 registered fisherfolks in Perez, Quezon from 2015 to 2021 according to BFAR. From this number, 1,304 are males while 194 are females. Most of the registered fisherfolks according to their recorded demographic profile, not differentiated by their sex, is within the 60-years-old-and-above age bracket with an average number of 0-5 children. This list, according to the Perez Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO), is the master list of beneficiaries for the Cash and Food Subsidy Program for Marginal Farmers and Fisherfolks launched by BFAR. This study, therefore, focused and selected 50 female fisherfolks that belong to the informal sector and those who work in small scale fisheries as they are in the best position to be part of this study. Particularly, they are engaged in municipal or

commercial capture fisheries including both inland and marine fishery in Perez, Quezon, within the researchers' access. Aside from fishing activities, most of the respondents have multiple roles within the productive and reproductive spheres including but not limited to attending to house and care-giving chores, regular jobs, and small businesses.

Results and Discussion

A total of 50 female fisherfolks responded to the field surveys. The respondents came from different fishery production categories under capture fisheries: 21 respondents are involved in inland capture fisheries while 12 respondents in non-food use production category. All 50 respondents are involved in marine capture fisheries and in the food production category. A relatively low number of respondents are involved in inland capture fisheries, which may be attributed to the geographical characteristics of the municipality where there are only few shallow bodies of freshwater and abundant salt water.

Table 1. Participation in Different Production Categories

Inland capture fisheries	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Non-food use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
very high participation	1	2	very high participation	4	8
high participation	5	10	high participation	4	8
moderate participation	9	18	moderate participation	3	6
low participation	6	12	low participation	1	2
no participation	29	58	no participation	38	76
Marine capture fisheries			Human consumption		
very high participation	36	72	very high participation	38	76
high participation	8	16	high participation	7	14
moderate participation	4	8	moderate participation	5	10
low participation	2	4	low participation	0	0
no participation	0	0	no participation	0	0

Source: processed by researchers

Socio-demographics of female fisherfolks in Perez, Quezon

Table 2 shows that the mean age of female fisher folks is at 44.3 years (SD=11.89). This falls in similar age range, 41-50 years old, with the female fisherfolks from previous studies such that of Torell et al., (2021), 46 years old; Szymkowiak and Rhodes-Reese (2020), 45 years old; and Adeleke (2013) 48.5 years old. This suggests that the majority of female fisherfolks in Perez, Quezon are still at their economically active or prime working age. Notably, a high percentage of respondents were in their 50s, compared to the 20-30 years old age bracket which implies the presence of a large segment of the aging fisherfolk population.

In terms of marital status, 84% of the respondents were married, 8% were widowed, 4% were single and 4% were separated. Notably, married women dominated the list consistent with previous studies such as in Torell et al. (2021), Mutia et al. (2018), Adeleke, (2013), and Yarhere (2005). Nwabeze et al., (2012) as cited by Cliffe and Akinrotimi, (2015) suggested this finding can be attributed to women’s proactivity in sustaining their families’ food security and income.

The respondents had varying fishing industry experience: 36% had 0-10 years of experience, 20% had 11-20 years of experience, 22% had 21-30 years of experience, 12% had more than 40-50 years of experience while the remaining 10% had 31-40 years of experience. The large number of respondents in the 0-30 years range of experience attested the claim of many researchers such as De Guzman, Sumalde, Colance, Ponce, and Rance (2016); Kleiber, Harris, and Vincent (2014); Mutia et al., (2018); and Torell et al. (2021) that women had a long history in the fishing industry. In contrast to the aging population of the respondents, a relatively large number of respondents had 0-10 years range of experience. This may be explained by the recent trends in the fishing industry of Perez, Quezon such as the introduction of Sargassum and seaweed production to the locals which encouraged more women to get involved in fishing activities.

Majority of the respondents (94%) had other members of the family who were working in the fishing sector: husband (41.4%), children (19.5%), siblings (16.1%), parents (11.5%) and relatives (11.5%). Notably, when asked about their fishing experience, many of the respondents start by recalling *“ilang taon na ba mula noong ako’y isinasama sa dagat ng aking nanay/tatay?”* (How many years has it been since my parents taught me to work in the sea?) or *“ilang taon na ba nong kami’y magsama ng aking asawa”* (How many years has it been since I was married to my husband?). Thus, this finding implies the possible influence of family members to female fisherfolks’ involvement in the sector.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age	Number	Percentage (%)	Years in fishing industry	Number	Percentage (%)
<20 years old	1	2	0 to 10 years	18	36
20-30 years old	7	14	11-20 years	10	20
31-40 years old	11	22	21-30 years	11	22
41-50 years old	9	18	31-40 years	5	10
>50 years old	22	44	40 to 50 years	6	12

Marital Status	Number	Percentage (%)	Has other fishermen in the family	Number	Percentage (%)
Single	2	4	no	3	6
Married/partner	42	84	yes	47	94
Separated	2	4	husband	36	41.4
Widowed	4	8	children	17	19.5
			parents	10	11.5
			siblings	14	16.1
			relatives	10	11.5

Source: processed by researchers

Nature of Women's Participation in Capture Fisheries

Table 3 shows the nature of participation of women in capture fisheries. In terms of their fishing grounds, 65% fish inshore which includes bays and estuaries, 20% fish nearshore (2 nautical miles from the shore) while the remaining 15% fish offshore (more than 2 nautical miles from the shore). Likewise, De Guzman et al., (2016); Kleiber et al., (2017); Prieto-Carolino (2016; Siason (2002) found similar findings suggesting that female fisherfolks are more engaged in gleaning activities in shallow ecosystems. Cliffe & Akinrotimi (2015); De Guzman (2019) on the other hand, noted women's need to attend to household duties as a deciding factor on their preferred fishing grounds. The respondents' target species varied but the majority catch fish species (43.2%).

Table 3. Nature of Women's Participation in Capture Fisheries

Fishing Ground	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inshore	39	65
Near Shore	12	20
Offshore	9	15
Target Species		
Fish	41	43.2
Crustaceans	8	8.4
Bivalves	4	4.2
Gastropods	24	25.3
Cephalopods	11	11.6
Algae (Sargassum)	7	7.4
Catch destination		
Local Market	8	7.9
Neighborhood	40	39.6
Exported	15	14.9
Buyer	4	4.0
Household	34	33.7
Usual Buyers		
Market vendors	2	2.9
Neighbors	43	62.3
Need-based Consumer	13	18.8
Middlemen	11	15.9

Source: processed by researchers

Other fishery products that they catch include: gastropods, "*pinanlakayahan*" in local terms, which is often comprised of different shellfish including "*tutukin*" (Trochus snail), "*sahang*" (Spider conch), "*sikad-sikad*" (Little bear conch), and "*ila-ila*" (Onch slug/*Onchidium spp.*) (25.3%); cephalopods specifically squid, octopus or "*gutos*" and giant octopus or "*manala*" (11.6%); crustaceans (8.4%); algae specifically *Sargassum* seaweeds or "*kulapo*" (7.4%) and bivalves (4.2%). This contrasts with the idea of the traditional gender-segregated labor documented by previous studies that exclusively associate men to catching fish species and women to gleaning of invertebrates (Kleiber, 2014). Their usual catch destination included neighborhood (39.6%), household (33.7%), exported outside the island (14.9%), local market (7.9%) and need-based consumers (4.0%). The usual buyers of their

harvest/catch are the respondent's neighbors (62.3%), need-based consumers (18.8%), middlemen (15.9%) and market vendors (2.9%).

Participation of women in different activities of capture fisheries

Table 4 shows the extent of women's participation in different fishing activities across fishery value chains. In fabrication of fishing gear, 56% of the respondents reportedly engaged, in varying intensity. In maintenance of fishing gears which includes cleaning, organizing, fixing, and storing of fishing gears, 58% were engaged. In terms of gear use, 64% utilized active fishing gears which include nets, spears, and seines. Slightly higher number of respondents (69%) used passive gears, predominantly hook and line. Traps were not commonly used in the municipality.

Table 4. Women's Participation in Different Activities of Capture Fisheries

Fabrication of fishing gears	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Gleaning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regular	12	24	Regular	22	44
Occasional	13	26	Occasional	16	32
Rarely	3	6	Rarely	1	2
Never	22	44	Never	11	22
Maintenance of fishing gears			Processing		
Regular	12	24	Regular	32	64
Occasional	11	22	Occasional	10	20
Rarely	6	12	Rarely	4	8
Never	21	42	Never	4	8
Use of active fishing gears			Marketing		
Regular	14	28	Regular	32	64
Occasional	15	30	Occasional	9	18
Rarely	3	6	Rarely	2	4
Never	18	36	Never	7	14
Use of passive fishing gears			Management		
Regular	20	40	Regular	1	2
Occasional	12	24	Occasional	0	0
Rarely	5	10	Rarely	0	0
Never	13	26	Never	49	98

Source: processed by researchers

A high percentage of respondents (78%) were involved in gleaning or gathering activities during low tide. In processing which include cleaning, cutting, and freezing, and marketing activities, 92% and 84% of respondents were involved respectively. In management activities, a notably low number, 2%, of the respondents were engaged. This finding supports the claims of previous researchers that there is stereotyping of fishing activities or opportunities intended for women in terms of ownership of assets (Mutia et al., 2018; Mwaijande, F. A., Lugendo, 2015) and getting management positions (Siason, 2002).

This result is also consistent to the result of a study conducted in two coastal communities in Ghana, Africa wherein women were key players in processing the fish caught by men and also by converting the catch into cash through the equally important tasks as either small scale retailers or large scale traders (Ameyaw, et al., 2020).

Fishing and Non-Fishing Roles of Women

Table 5 presents the productive and reproductive roles of women inside and outside the fishing industry. Across the different value chains of the sector, 38.7% were directly involved in fishing for income, 25.3% in processing of catch/harvest, 16% in subsistence fishing, 10.7% in marketing, 5.3% in assisting their husbands in fishing activities, while 4% in fabrication and maintenance of fishing gears and equipment. This finding shows that women are involved in all aspects of the fishery value chain from pre-fishing, fishing to post-fishing activities.

Table 5. Fishing and Non-fishing Roles of Women

Across the fishing value chain	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fabrication and maintenance of gears and equipment	3	4.0
Fishing (income-generating activities)	29	38.7
Subsistence fishing	12	16.0
Providing supportive roles in fishing	4	5.3
Processing of catch	19	25.3
Marketing of catch	8	10.7
Other roles outside the fishing industry		
House chores	36	31.0
Planting	27	23.3
Charcoal making	5	4.3
Small business	30	25.9
Copra farming	6	5.2
Part-time/regular jobs	12	10.3

Source: processed by researchers

This conforms to the suggestions of previous studies that women were active participants to the different value chains of the fishing industry (Prieto-Carolino, 2016; Siason, 2002; Torell et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2002; Williams, 2001). Furthermore, in the study of O’neill, Crona, Ferrer, Pomeroy, and Jiddawi (2018) that was conducted in fisheries in Zanzibar and the Philippines, it was highlighted that the importance of gender and chain transaction forms need to be further shown as it was deemed “necessary for governance decisions around fisheries, poverty alleviation, and increased global market integration” (p. 12).

Majority of the respondents, however, have primary roles in active fishing than in processing and marketing, which also constitute a big percentage of the respondents’ responses. This is not, however, consistent with the findings of Cliffe and Akinrotimi (2015); Mutia et al., (2018); Odulate, George, and Idowu (2012) which suggest that women were more involved in marketing than in active fishing and processing activities. Among the non-fishing activities of women were: attending to house chores (31%), managing a small

business such a sari-sari store or selling non-fishery products (25.9%), planting (23.3%), attending to their part-time or regular job as Barangay Health Workers, laundry women (5.2%), copra farming (5.2%), and charcoal making (4.3%).

Challenges of the fishing industry

The respondents were asked to freely express the challenges that they encounter in the fishing industry. Table 6 presents the summary of their responses. Majority of the respondents, which accounted for 46.8%, indicated bad weather conditions such as extreme heat, storms, and the like. Respondent no. 3 noted: *"Aba'y pagkulo ng dagat, pagkulo ng tiyan"* (Turbulent sea means rumbling of stomach to us). Low and unstable catch accounted for 15.2% of the responses. *"Depende sa panahon ang huli, minsan dagsa, minsan tuyo"* (Depending upon weather conditions, sometimes we have bountiful catch, sometimes we get nothing), a respondent noted. Low market price also made it to the list with 7.6%. Sargassum (*kulapo*) gatherers are particularly challenged by the low market price of Php 4.00 per kilogram (Equivalent to 0.08 USD) of dried Sargassum which they must gather and process (dry) for days.

Table 6. Challenges Women Encountered in the Fishing Industry

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bad weather conditions	37	46.8
Lack of gears	5	6.3
Low and unstable catch	12	15.2
Lack of time	4	5.1
Low price of catch	6	7.6
Health issues and accidents	5	6.3
Unfair treatment for female workers	3	3.8
Pests and diseases	5	6.3
Competitors	2	2.5

Source: processed by researchers

Other challenges included, lack of capital and fishing gear (6.3%), occurrence of pests and diseases (6.3%), and accidents/health issues (6.3%). Lack of time due to house chores and other part-time jobs was also a challenge for some (5.1%). Respondent 9 noted, *"Mas maraming trabaho ang babae kaysa sa lalaki dahil bukod sa trabaho sa dagat, may trabaho pa pagdating ng bahay"* (Women have more responsibilities than men, aside from their fishing activities, they also have jobs at home). Unfair treatment of women in the fishing industry is a concern of 3.8% of the respondents. They noted, *"Maraming nambabarat kapag babae ang naglalako ng huli"* (Many customers try to bargain price when women sell the catch). Tough competition in both fishing and marketing is yet another concern of 2.5% of the respondents.

Observations and over-all impression of respondents

The respondents were also asked to express their observations, comments or recommendations concerning women’s participation in the fishing industry (Table 7). Many of them, 22.6%, reported that women could do what men can: “*Kaya rin ng babae ang mga trabaho ng lalaki*” in their own words. Some also noticed the spike in number of fisherfolks during the pandemic (17%): “*Marami na ang sumasama sa dagat ngayon, nanlalakaya, ‘yung iba ay nangungulapo na rin at nagse-seaweeds gawa ng pandemya, sa hirap ng buhay*” (More women are getting involved in fishing activities; gleanings of seashells, gathering of sargassum and planting of seaweeds due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis it has brought). 15.1% view fishing activities as dangerous and difficult jobs for women in general. Some respondents, on the other hand, think that only few women engage in fishing activities (9.4%), women are frequently on the subsistence level of fishing (9.4%), it is often the wives of fishermen or lesbians who join commercial fishing offshore (9.4%), and processing and marketing are frequently women’s jobs (9.4%). Another 7.5% noted that women are often assistants of their husbands in fishing activities. Some of the respondents’ recommendations (summarized in Table 7) include increasing the size of seaweed production programs for women (16.7%), giving livelihood programs aside from fishing (25%), providing gears and equipment for women fisherfolks (33.3%) and encouraging other women to fish and help their families through fishing (25%).

Table 7. Observations and Recommendations of Women’s Role in the Fishing Industry

Observations	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fishing is a dangerous and difficult job for women.	8	15.1
Only few women engage in fishing.	5	9.4
Women are more involved in subsistence fishing.	5	9.4
The pandemic caused rise in number of women fisherfolks.	9	17.0
Women are often assistants of their husbands.	4	7.5
Women who engage in offshore fishing are commonly lesbians or wives of fishermen.	5	9.4
Processing and marketing are often women’s jobs.	5	9.4
Women can do what men can.	12	22.6
Recommendations		
Increase seaweed-related livelihood programs for women.	2	16.7
Create other livelihood for women other than fishing.	3	25.0
Provide fishing gears and materials for women.	4	33.3
Encourage other women to participate in fishing activities to help their family.	3	25.0

Source: processed by researchers

One of the most notable observations of the researchers during data gathering was that the respondents, in general, had different perceptions of a fisherfolk. Most of them equate fishing to commercial fishing and joining vessels that sail offshore to catch high-value fishery products. Thus, most respondents did not consider themselves as fisherfolks. Most of them do not directly associate themselves to the term fisherfolk but identify themselves as either assistant of their husband in fishing (*katulong ng asawa*), gleaners (*manlalakaya sa hibasan*), seller of their husband’s catch (*maglalako ng huli ng asawa*) or Sargassum

gatherers (*magkukulapo*). This traditional social construct where women are tagged with a supportive role to fishers and their low self-esteem are among the major constraints to women's visibility, fair compensation and gender equity in the fishing (Torell et al., 2021; World Wildlife Fund, 2019). This issue on unfair treatment of female fishers was also reported in the study conducted in Kenya by Matsue, Daw, and Garrett (2014). The authors described the disregard and reluctance of both state officials and fishermen to acknowledge their women counterparts (referred to as *mama karanga*) in the sector because of their belief of latter's incapability to fish. This unfair treatment to female fishers discourages them from engaging in fisheries because they might cause bad luck as some communities perceive to bring.

Conclusion

This paper recognizes that women's roles in the fishing industry of Perez, Quezon, Philippines are significant in food security of both coastal and non-coastal households and in the local economy of the rural community. This study, however, only focused on women's roles and participation in the small-scale fishing industry of Perez, Quezon; thus, differences in gender roles, contributions and perceptions in the fishery were neither captured nor provided in-depth discussion in this research. Further analysis of gender roles and participation may be conducted to better understand the stereotypes, gendered roles, and barriers that hinders both the productivity of fishing communities and gendering of the fishing industry. Thus, conduct of multiple case studies with diverse units of analysis for in-depth understanding of the small-scale fishing activities and routines of female fisherfolks across areas of Quezon Province and other regions in the Philippines is encouraged.

Women have been active in the fishing industry of Perez, Quezon for many years both in commercial and small-scale levels. However, most female fisherfolks are still dubious whether they should be tagged as fisherfolks. This confusion might have rooted from the traditional belief that pre- and post-fishing activities are part of women's household duties, intermittent pattern of participation of many female fisherfolks, absence of sex-disaggregated data in local level, and the gender-blind approach of many fishery programs which may marginalize female workers in the sector. Nonetheless, the findings generally go against the prevailing stereotype that female fisherfolks are designated only with supportive roles in the sector specifically in processing and marketing. Thus, it acknowledges the participation of women in the different value chains in the small-scale fishing industry. It also unfolds the multiple roles, within productive and reproductive spheres, and the challenges that women must simultaneously attend to in their everyday routines aside from their fishing roles.

Incorporation of gender-mainstreaming in policies and projects by relevant local government units or concerned NGOs may encourage women's full representation and greater awareness on their critical role in the industry. Expanding the capacity building projects such as technology application trainings, distribution of fishing vessels and gears, and providing financial assistance for marginalized female fisherfolks are also recommended. Diversifying and strengthening of livelihoods for women in small communities may also be provided as alternative livelihood options especially for the elderly female fisherfolks. The findings of this study underscore the women's active, significant role and challenges that may provide baseline information to relevant local government agencies to further intensify

conduct of similar studies on the grounds and implementation of responsive gender mainstreaming programs in the fishing industry whether it comes from a small rural community. Also, this will guide the policy-makers and government leaders in the Philippines in formulating gender-sensitive local government policies that will impact the female fishers in the country and their respective families and communities at large.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Mariela M. De La Cruz, Aristotle M. Cañazares and John Dereck Jasmin for the data gathering assistance and technical works on various field sites leading toward the completion of the initial phase of this research project and to our colleagues who shared their critical feedbacks during one of the campus research fora.

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